

Indonesian Democracy In The Era Viralitas : Gender Inequality And Political Clarification In The Digital Public Space

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Abstract

This study analyzes how the virality of content and practices of clarification on social media shape the dynamics of Indonesian democracy, particularly through gender inequality and the production of political discourse in the digital public sphere. By combining the mediatization of politics framework, patriarchal theory, and the perspective of para-social influence, this study finds that digital actors—including influencers—play a crucial role in legitimizing or delegitimizing political narratives. Using discourse-based normative qualitative analysis, this study reveals that women are more vulnerable to gender-based attacks, moral delegitimization, and social pressures that impact their political participation. The research findings indicate that virality is not simply a communication phenomenon but has transformed into a mechanism of power that influences public opinion and democratic processes. This research contributes to the development of digital democracy studies in Indonesia by emphasizing the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in understanding the relationship between gender, clarification politics, and social structures in the era of digital connectivity. The implication is that the state and platforms need to build digital governance that is more gender-equal and responsive to patterns of discourse manipulation that threaten the quality of democracy.

Keywords: gender equality, digital democracy, political clarification, virality

1. Introduction

Rapid technological developments have brought about many major changes in the digital world. technological developments are not only limited to the world of communication in public spaces. at the first, public space is only a physical space such as town squares, city parks, or live discussion spaces. but nowadays this has changed, face-to-face forums have now changed to digital form (**van Dijck, 2013**), digital platforms have become a new media that allows citizens to voice their opinions, distribute information, and organize social movements more quickly and widely (**Nyoka & Tembo, 2022**). digital transformation refers to the process of change within an organization that shifts its operational activities from manual systems to digital processes (**Siti Fatimah, 2025**), this phenomenon has become a paradox, one hand, strengthening democracy through open access to information, but the other hand, can present challenges such as the quality of political discourse and social justice.

One of the important phenomenal issues that is increasingly prominent in the era of virality is gender inequality. gender equality is a condition in which women and men have the same rights and opportunities as human beings. where there is no discrimination based on gender, allowing men and women to participate equally in various areas of life. gender equality can take the form of equal access to political, economic, civil, social, and cultural rights (**Gopin Pamungkas & Intan Agristin Nuraini, 2024**). many women, such as activists, politicians, or citizens in general who are involved in digital politics, are often faced with forms of gender-based violence, stigma, and justice that only favors one party. Based on data from the International Telecommunications Union, globally internet use for women is only 48%, while internet use for men is 58%, relatively, the gender gap in global internet usage is almost 17%. (**Internasional Telecommunications Union, 2023**). based on these obstacles, it

will result in significant gaps for women. when it comes to privacy, women do not enjoy the same level of protection as they are often seen as weak and safe targets for attack (**Ayu Riska Amalia dkk, 2024**). and not only that, a contributing factor is the virality phenomenon which prioritizes emotional, sensational content, which often reinforces gender bias and worsens women's exposure to digital violence and discrimination. various efforts have been made to overcome this problem. for example, the government has developed regulations and law enforcement mechanisms to address online violence, although their implementation has not always been effective and is not fully gender-sensitive. furthermore, many civil society organizations and gender advocacy groups have promoted equality-based digital literacy, provided legal assistance to victims of online gender-based violence, and campaigned for the importance of safe digital spaces for women.

Academics have also conducted extensive academic research to identify patterns of digital violence and the structural barriers women face online. this research is limited to the analysis of gender inequality in Indonesia's digital public space, the focus of the research does not cover the entire issue of digital democracy broadly, but is directed at how gender dynamics play a role and are reproduced through public interactions on social media. this study does not discuss all forms of gender discrimination in socio-political life, but is limited to the manifestation of gender inequality that appears in communication, representation, and public response on digital platforms. This study focuses on normative and descriptive qualitative analysis, so it does not quantitatively measure the level of gender inequality or the spread of viral content. the research findings are intended to provide theoretical understanding, phenomenon mapping, and critical analysis, not to produce statistical generalizations. In previous research, namely **Bambang Arianto** with his research entitled "*(Social Media as a New Space for Online Gender-Based Violence in Indonesia)*" has explained how social media has become a new space for online gender-based violence in Indonesia. however, this research only focuses on online gender-based violence and this research uses a gender and digital violence perspective that emphasizes patriarchal structures, power relations, and the phenomenon of KBGO (**Bambang Arianto, 2021**). while the research I conducted focused on gender inequality in the context of digital democracy, expanding the scope to the politics of clarification and how the public views female political actors in the era of virality. not only describing violence, but also analyzing the gender bias that emerges in the process of political clarification and public response.

This research was conducted to reveal how gender inequality can be formed and reinforced through virality and the practice of political clarification in the digital public space. To achieve these objectives, this research utilizes literature review, document analysis, and exploration of digital content related to women's political clarification on social media. data are analyzed by interpreting public discourse and responses, then comparing them to normative frameworks on gender equality and the principles of digital democracy. This approach is used to explain patterns of gender inequality and their relevance to the quality of democracy in the digital public sphere.

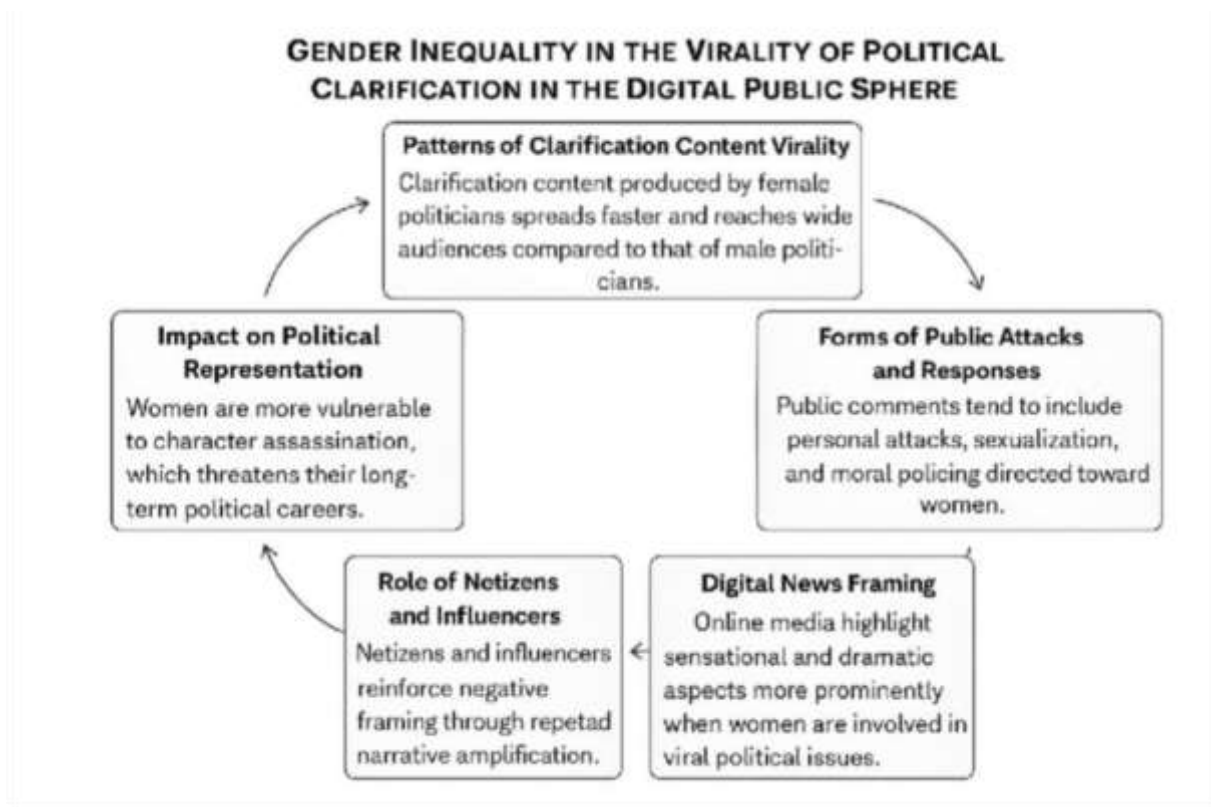
2. Method

This Research employs a normative qualitative method, combining theoretical study and analysis. To make easier to examine how gender inequality and political classification practices for women can be formed and produced in the public space of social media. Data was obtained through literature studies related to the researched titles, such as gender theory, feminist theory, digital democracy, and public spaces such as legal documents related to gender equality and digital rights, as well as digital content containing viral cases regarding political clarifications related to women. then, from the data, it will be analyzed interpretively through reading discourse, mapping public responses, and identifying power relations that emerge in digital interactions. Then, the findings will be compared with the normative

framework regarding the principles of gender equality and democracy to explain how gender bias patterns in social media can have implications for the quality of Indonesian democracy.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Presenting the Results



3.2. Create a Discussion

virality pattern of clarification content

Based on the research conducted, results were found that indicate that the dynamics of virality in Indonesia's digital public space have significantly strengthened gender inequality that has actually been present for a long time without us realizing it in the socio-political space. these findings align with the analytical chart showing that virality, representational bias, public response, and democratic legitimacy are structurally interconnected. gender issues do not emerge as incidental phenomena, but rather form a systematic pattern that influences how female politicians are perceived, confronted with public pressure, and positioned within digital political discourse. The data from SAFEnet (2021) shows that 47% Cases of Online Gender Based Violence (OGBV) in Indonesia were experienced by women who are active in public spaces, such as politicians and activists (**SAFEnet, 2021**). In the first stage, virality patterns emerge because social media algorithms prioritize personal, emotional, and controversy based content (. Clarification about women, such as politicians or public figures, often go viral more quickly than clarification about men, thus is because women's bodies and personal narratives are easier to turn into commodity attention (**Zeynep Tufekci, 2018**).

The content that is distributed can be in the form of fact – check, official clarification, or counter narrative built by influencers or netizens. In the media mediation theory put forward by Mazzoleni & Schulz, it is stated that the media not neutral, because many digital platforms have lost their direction, no longer serving as message channels, but also framing messages, determining which ones go viral and which cases get public attention (**Mazzoelni & Schulz,**

1999) Furthermore, in relation to gender equality, gender identity significantly influences who makes clarifications and how the public responds to them. This is reinforced by identity politics theory, which states that gender narratives can be used as a tool for mobilization and clarification, often seasoned with identity backgrounds. For example, women as victims of patriarchy are often criticized for challenging traditional values. In social feminist theory, patriarchy systematically positions men as dominant in the public sphere, while women are often confined to the private or domestic sphere. For example, although many women hold positions in government, they often face social, cultural, and political barriers. In this digital age, this hasn't disappeared; in fact, it can be amplified. Social media provides a space for participation, but algorithmic structures and cyber practices still reinforce gender bias. In Indonesia, there are many Instagram accounts that voice this, such as @indonesiafeminis, @lawanpatriaki, @perempuanberkisah. This is also in line with the results of Kusumarani's research, although the platform voices aspirations for women, women still receive negative comments that are miso-sexual or have sexual overtones (Kusumarani et al., 2025). In Indonesia, the law governing digital content and its clarifications is contained in the Electronic Information and Transactions Law, which serves as the primary reference. This law includes provisions regarding defamation, slander, or content that offends morality. However, this legal framework does not always align with the need for complex political clarification, particularly regarding gender identity. For example, if clarification challenges patriarchal narratives, platform owners or law enforcement officials may interpret it as provocative or violating social norms, which would undoubtedly suppress the freedom of expression of gender groups.

Forms of Attacks and Public Responses in Digital Space After the clarification forms were distributed, various forms of public attacks emerged, ranging from pro to con. One comment that women are particularly vulnerable to is body shimming or questioning their competence in politics. This aligns with an analysis of power dynamics in online media, where women in politics receive different attention due to traditional masculine political norms (Mustafa dkk, 2025). In this case, social media users or netizens respond to clarification in the form of comments, replies, criticism, whether in the form of support or trolling. This means that social media is not only for the public as consumers but also makes the public into producers of political criticism which also includes clarification (Jenkins, 2006).

Digital news framework

To address these dynamics, robust regulations are needed to ensure that the notification framework is not merely a formality but an effective one. The ITE Law could be reformed by incorporating transparent clarification mechanisms, such as requiring platforms to create clarification labels, notice and take down, or providing a platform for official rebuttals. Furthermore, governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) can collaborate to establish a "social media council" or independent regulatory mechanism, which helps handle content disputes, mediate clarifications, and provide protection for clarification providers from gender-vulnerable groups.

The Role of Netizens and Influencers in Political Clarification

Netizens also play a very important role in public clarification. Netizens can play a dual role, like disseminating clarification, supporting pro-gender equality narratives, or even becoming digital whistleblowers who demand transparency and justice. However, netizens can also reinforce polarization through echo chambers: when they only interact with people who share their views, clarifications from dissenting groups (pro-gender women) may be ignored or rejected. Influencers are parasocial actors who can legitimize or delegitimize political narratives through micro-celebrity practices (Abidin, 2021). Influential figures from celebrities, public figures, and credible content creators can provide more constructive and inclusive political clarification, such as providing gender clarification, and reaching netizens who are generally difficult to reach. However, this also carries significant risks. For example, influencers aligned with conservative groups could manipulate the clarification

narrative to reinforce stereotypes or ideologically attack women. Therefore, the role of influencers as clarification mediators must be accompanied by ethical responsibility and digital literacy.

Impact on Public Representation and Democracy

Social media is crucial for female politicians to shape their self-image and convey political messages, but they face challenges of representation and public perception **(Riri Kusumarani dkk, 2025)** Not a few female politicians in the legislature use Instagram to share personal aspects (family) as a strategy to counter traditional stereotypes, but the structure of engagement on social media is not always balanced **(Musdalifah dkk, 2022)**. the impact on political representation also impacts democratic representation. If women and gender minorities face systematic attacks when they express their political opinions, their voices will be muffled. This leads to disproportionate public representation: narratives that benefit patriarchal or conservative groups will be more prominent, while narratives of gender equality may be marginalized. From a democratic perspective, when digital openness successfully creates a more inclusive space, Indonesian democracy can become more substantial not merely a procedural democracy like elections, but a democracy that truly reflects women's voices and interests. Conversely, if the digital openness framework is weak and legal protections inadequate, digital democracy can become a means of silencing gender identities, where dominant groups (based on gender) maintain their narratives without serious challenge.

4. Conclusion

In the era of digital virality, political clarification has become a crucial tool in maintaining democratic integrity, but its access and impact are heavily influenced by gender inequality. attacks against women in the digital public sphere can hamper the effectiveness of clarification and public participation. to strengthen an inclusive digital democracy, a fair and responsive digital notification framework is needed, along with the crucial role of netizens and influencers as mediators of clarification. regulations (such as the ITE Law) need to be further reviewed to protect the right to express opinions (including clarification) and prevent abuse, while promoting digital gender literacy. ultimately, if digital clarification can be implemented inclusively, public representation, particularly gender representation, in Indonesian democracy will be stronger and more meaningful. This research broadens understanding of media, politics, and gender in the digital realm, demonstrating how content virality, algorithmic structures, and netizen participation interact. It also reinforces the recognition that digital democracy requires an integration of law, media literacy, and gender advocacy to achieve an inclusive public sphere. future authors are advised to analyze social media algorithms, conduct longitudinal studies to monitor changes in gender representation, test digital clarification strategies, compare interactions across platforms, and integrate legal, media literacy, and gender advocacy perspectives to support inclusive digital democracy.

5. Acknowledgement

The author would like to express his gratitude to his family, partners, and those closest to him for their moral and intellectual support in the preparation of this paper. Special thanks are also extended to the academics, researchers, and digital media practitioners who provided data, insights, and literature related to gender inequality, content virality, and digital democracy in Indonesia. The author hopes that this paper will contribute to the study of media, politics, and gender, and serve as a foundation for further research in the era of digital democracy.

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